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AUTHOR Oswald, James M.
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ABSTRACT

The complexity of the Indian society can be overwhelming, and preparation for travel in India requires careful and detailed advance planning. Practical suggestions are provided for travelers to help them understand cultural differences, avoid illnesses, and select appropriate clothing for the intense heat. Explanations are given about the monetary system, exchange rates, accommodations, tipping, and kinds of food, as well as guidelines for meeting and interacting with the Indian people. Suggestions are also made for obtaining a wide variety of necessary services. (NL)

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PREPARING FOR TRAVEL IN INDIA

by

James M. Oswald

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PREPARING FOR TRAVEL IN INDIA

James M. Oswald

India welcomes the prepared traveler, and if you are planning a journey there, these thoughts will help with organization and physiological and psychological readiness.

Food, clothing, and shelter are readily accessible all over India - if you know who to ask, and how. As elsewhere, pretentiousness has its rewards.... People will sense it if you feel disdain toward them. Open your heart and they will respond positively. There can be great variance in deliveries of goods and services in this vast cultural theater: a roasted potato can cost less than a penny at a village stall along the Ganges, corn on the cob about the same, you may be served a feast free in any of thousands of temples, or your selections may result in credit card charges of several dollars... plus service charge... plus taxes... plus credit card fee in a grand hotel or restaurant in Calcutta, Madras, or Bombay. Jugglers and elephants may perform free for your enjoyment as someone offers you a cup of water for a fee. A Hindu priest in Vrindaban, a town in Bengal, gave me a general rule to explain variance: "Everything is according to time and circumstance." Indeed. In India, you will observe greater variance among lifestyles and standards than you may have seen before. India offers everything. You have to find it.

Most important is surely mental attitude whenever one travels. Positive attitude provides tremendous benefits in

India. If one's shoes are taken outside an exotic temple, better to face the situation with a smile. Walking barefoot is pleasant in warm, soft earth and on cool stone temple floors. Shoelessness is common; unless an issue is made, no one will notice. The prepared traveler expects such a possibility and has spare sandals. Shoes, by the way, may gather dust in rural areas and be too hot and uncomfortable. Sandals let dust fly on by and they are easy to slip into and out of; that's why Indians who use footwear prefer sandals. They fit the climate and terrain and are inexpensive as well. A dollar buys a modest pair, or you can spend up to twelve dollars for molded rubber sandals with special soles, heels, and style. Those who anticipate the potential for "disappearing shoes" will be happier in India by planning ahead. Think of it as a way of participating and sharing....

India is dusty; expect dust to permeate everything. If you adapt to loose weave cotton garb - dhoti, kurta, and chadra - dust will filter through. Also you'll be comfortably protected from intense sun and ventilated nicely. In such wear, hot bright days are pleasant. At noon one pulls the chadra cloth over the head, shielding even the face if necessary. Evenings and early morning, this same chadra serves as a warm shawl over the shoulders. In a pinch it's a towel or wrapped around your waist serves as stylish swimwear. The simple saris for females may be more practical still. Insist on Western-style clothing made of artificial fibers and you may be uncomfortable. Native Indian clothing is readily available and reasonably priced;

five dollars can buy all three male clothing items in coarse white cotton. A sari can cost about the same, less, or more. Tailors can outfit you in tinted silks with embroidery and your choice of brocade if you wish to pay for the luxury. Would you like tiny mirrors glistening on your garb? Fabric woven of gold and silver thread? On a bus, in a village, in lodgings grand or spare, no one will particularly notice or care how much you've spent costuming yourself, so dress for relaxation and easy maintenance. The plainest wear may draw out this common response: "Comfortable, isn't it?"

Your towel can be a comfort after a rooftop shower on a hot day. Make it dark blue, brown, or green then you won't worry about its looking soiled. Wash and dry it wherever you like (Take along some clothespins and a sturdy cord clothesline. You'll not find coin-operated washing and drying machines often in India. Plan to wash in a pail or tub and bring powdered detergent. The bright India sun will serve instead of bleach).

Simple cotton t-shirts are good trading items, most Indians will wear small. Take them for yourself, too; and a sturdy sweater and light jacket. Evenings can be cool. Sometimes, India, air conditioning works too well.

No one consciously wishes to be sick. There's no advantage to it. Wisdom dictates simple health maintenance procedures in India. Compared with many developing nations, India has marvelous health care - in places. It is easy to be well and healthy, the Indian climate is invigorating, most vegetables are cooked before serving, and you can peel fruit and purify

your own supply of water. One nurse advised, "drink only beer." But that is not possible; beer will be rarely seen outside of the major cities and must be consumed - on certain legally prescribed days only - in the state where it is produced. India may seem puritanical in attitudes toward alcohol. Unless you stay in major cities you cannot subsist on beer. You can, however, exist on "soda water." There's no Coca-Cola in India, "Coke" wouldn't give the patented formula to the government (Indeed, there are hardly any U.S. consumer products in India. But you'll find similar Indian products). There are various colas, however, and orange soda: "Milko," a bottled milk, water, and sugar beverage is popular. "Limca" is carbonated water flavored with lime and lemon. And "plain soda" can usually be found. Many Westerners "live on plain soda." It will seem inexpensive to you, but for most Indians unaffordable. Everywhere you will find boiled water, fruit juices, simple cooked rice, peanuts and roasted garbanzo beans, and potatoes - "aloo." With any flexibility at all you'll not dehydrate or starve in India. More probably you'll enjoy some of the finest meals of your life.

Indian hygiene is unique. Prepare to see the unusual. Away from commercial airplanes and first class western hotels, toilet paper does not exist. Nor tissues. Most defecate and then "wash." The prepared traveler will have small packets of "Kleenex" or another favorite brand tucked in each suitcase (and pocket) enroute. As gifts these are treasured by companions on trains and buses. Indians historically use their

left hand in lieu of toilet paper - a relatively modern innovation even in the West. Even kings and royalty had no such thing until either the nineteenth or twentieth century. Much of India, remember, lives as Americans and Europeans did just one or two centuries ago. And some Indians - the middle class now numbers two hundred million and upper class, rich people have not disappeared - live more luxurious lives than average Westerners can imagine. Toilets, where they exist, tend to be small ceramic ovals set in a concrete floor. Two bricks are often provided for your crouching feet and a water spigot and container or water-filled clay pot will be within reach. These skills are quickly developed. And, frankly, it can be scientifically argued that manually applied soap and water are more cleansing than the western tissue paper.

Carry your own soap. "Dr. Bronner's Peppermint Soap" in a thumb-sized "Shaklee" plastic dropper bottle is practical; two drops with local water and you'll have a toilet system which works very well. Pour water in the floor basin to flush....

Sunburn can be real in India. You'll probably be closer to the equator than usual and out of doors much more. Aloe vera in a simple lotion can be used for skin protection and after-shampoo hair conditioner.

Take Dr. Bronner's liquid peppermint soap into the shower or bath, a little aloe vera afterwards, and you'll be clean, shining, and smell good. Indians bathe often, twice a day is not unusual. They'll expect you to "take bath" regularly and won't understand if you don't. In the hot, dry (most of the

year) climate, "taking bath" feels good. The poorest beggar will be seen bathing regularly. Indians strive to be clean.

How hot is it? Take along a small thermometer which you can read. Indians express temperatures in degrees Centigrade. Unless you are comfortable with the metric system designations, carry your own Fahrenheit thermometer. A camping store can supply one for several dollars.

No one will intentionally give you an illness. However, you can achieve that condition by permitting well-intentioned merchants to wipe the top of your opened soda with their hand. Some, who are very well intentioned, might insert a finger or thumb to ensure the bottle glass is clean. Just open your own. Visually inspect the contents. Even in the U.S. insects have been found in bottles occasionally. Whatever can happen here can also happen in India. Their systems, like ours, rarely offer zero defects.

If you forget which hand to use in toilets and don't keep your fingernails clean or use soap regularly, you might get sick. If that's your goal, eat everything everywhere - try all the foods the first day, gorge. Most places in the world that'll land you in bed. But why take such risks?

Remember, when seated cross-legged on the ground or floor, eating with that right hand from a mound of delicious food heaped on a banana leaf in front of you: don't eat too much, don't try everything too quickly, and don't drink anything unless you observed it being boiled, saw its bottle being opened hygienically, or purified the water yourself.

It would not be unusual in India to see a huge copper vat of water carefully boiled - and then smiling helpers plunge dungy, dirty buckets into the vat, ceremoniously bringing out (?) pure-boiled water. Here's how simple water purification can be. Purchase water purification tablets (fifty can cost under two dollars) in a camping supplies store before leaving your country. In India, drop one of these in each quart of local water in your canteen. A translucent plastic canteen may be especially practical for United Nations medical researchers advise that even sewage polluted water can be "sterilized" by setting it in a glass or plastic container in direct sunlight. Clear glass is best, even opaque plastic will work in time. Apparently, no bacteria survive sunlight - probably due to ultraviolet waves which penetrate glass and plastic and act against waterborne bacteria - and it's less costly than even army surplus water purification tablets. Best results, according to the researchers, are achieved with water in clear glass flasks - pyrex and clear, thin plastic bags. Seems too simple? Try it at home before you depart. Check with your doctor. The researchers placed drops of raw sewage water in glass and plastic containers and then inspected bacterial activity with microscopes every few hours. Everything living died. A quart or gallon of water in a clear bottle can be sterilized by sunlight between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Presumably, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. would work as well. And, take along the time-tested tablets for purifying water army and expedition style. They could save your life and ensure health along your

route. Why be thirsty or ill when planning can prevent these problems?

An Indian friend advises, "go to a first-class, western hotel or restaurant from time to time and drink whatever you like." Take it easy, acclimate a little at a time. He also recommends "dark, rough trousers" such as brown corduroy for traveling on trains and buses. You won't have to wash often; you'll not see the dust. It is very good advice.

Not all foods will be served on a banana leaf. Often you'll find it on the Indian equivalent of paper plates, a platter made of leaves held together with tiny pieces of wood, like little toothpicks. Apparently millions of women and children make these. The fresh leaves and dried leaf platters require no washing. They're tossed somewhere after a meal and whatever is hungry helps itself. Complex mechanical systems are not the Indian way. Instead, leftovers and the plates may be eaten by goats, dogs, hogs. Cows can be seen chewing these leaf platters after human meals all over India. (They also eat flowers discarded by people: only in India can one regularly see cows placidly munching on leaf plates, leftover food, and chains of flowers while standing in the middle of the road. Of course cars go around! And camels, donkeys, and elephants, too. One doesn't bother a cow. Just walk around.)

Indian food is wholesome. You'll be amazed at how good it tastes and low it can be priced. The standard fare is rice over which some blend of cooked vegetables has been poured. Plain, brown, flat bread rounds are chapatis, cooked fresh every meal,

everywhere. Maybe yoghurt or fruit in yoghurt, or some spicy pickle or chutney relish will be served alongside. Sweet desserts, usually made of milk and sugar or honey, are a typical finale for a complete meal. Perhaps you'll be offered fresh fruit. "Only two bananas? Please, take more, they're small...."

Did you take shots and have you brought along malaria prevention tablets? If not, any Indian hospital or medical center can probably provide them at embarrassingly low cost. Under socialized medicine you may find many services free. You could contract any of several types of malaria in India but probably won't. Ask all day and you'll probably not find anyone in India who's had malaria or whose relatives have had malaria. Still it's wise to anticipate possibilities and take the preventive medicine. The tablets put chemicals in your blood which preclude malarial eggs from hatching and potentially lodging for a lifetime in your liver. The cost of avoiding becoming a host is the medicine; read its side effects, make your decision, and never look back. Typically you must take the malaria tablets several weeks before and after visiting India, Haiti, Mexico, South East Asia, Africa.... The disease formerly existed in Philadelphia and, of course, New Orleans. It's nothing new. Few Indians lie awake nights haunted by it. Illnesses exist in every country, including your own, yet you do not contract them all. If you did you'd no be traveling.

Typhoid could be unpleasant, cholera also. So consider the U.S. Public Health Service recommendations for travelers to

India - shots for cholera, typhoid, and tetanus. If you were ever in military service you have probably alread had them and will need only boosters. The whole batch requires only ten minutes to administer. They won't cost much. Ask your doctor; read the encyclopedia; decide for yourself. Health care is an individual matter. Just think about it before departure. Life is a series of choices.

Where will you sleep?

Indian trains - first class compartments with fans or air conditioning - can be pleasant overnight hotels. Each Indian city offers grand hotels, first class and westernized in every sense: service, quality, and price. One can easily spend a hundred dollars a day in a majestic hotel suite, double that if you wish. Or, modest, clean hotel rooms can cost only two or three dollars each night. These may be within a block of the palatial suites. Throughout India you'll find every sort of guest houses and ashrams; many if not most will welcome your visit at a most reasonable cost. These may have a garden, orchard, well, cottages or motel-like side-by-side rooms, a kitchen, meal service area, and temple and classroom areas. These are Christian ashrams and Hindu, Buddhist, and surely also Muslims, Phar sees, Jains, and Sikhs will offer pleasant accommodations if only you ask with a smile! (Always smile, be meek, and kind in India. Don't say, "Who took my shoes... I'll fix him!" Instead try, "My shoes seem to be missing, perhaps I misplaced them, maybe someone will return them." Even if you don't get the footwear back, you'll suffer less stress; no

reason for high blood pressure in India. Relax. Take things one at a time and with positive expectation. Let India surprise and please you.).

Guest houses are scattered all over India. The British built them and modern temple managements surround their edifices with them. Just remember the key words: place to sleep, hotel, ashrama, guest house. Rest assured, you'll sleep somewhere each night in India.

At Calcutta Airport, and perhaps most others, the local hotels jointly share a service which locates the room you need. Specify price, quality, or area and they'll accommodate you. In the unlikely event that all rooms are taken - and this is inconceivable these days - the clerk might offer to share his home with you. If he senses your status is much higher than his, he might ask the airport manager to take you to his residence.

It's not difficult to find accommodation in India; signs are posted, people are open, and anyone will help you. A young legless beggar outside a Bombay hotel was asked, "Could I come to where you sleep on the sidewalk beside the Bank of America and spend the night?" He answered blithely, "Sure." He had forty cents and when asked, "What if I took it from you?" replied, pointing around him to the peanut man, cigarette boy, gymnastics girl, monkey trainer, and others walking by, "They'd take care of me. We share food. We help one another." It was Easter Sunday but in India, that perception, attitude, and confidence of survival is common everyday. If you give it half

a chance, the Indian spirit will refresh you immeasurably.

Indian perceptions may differ from those to which you are accustomed. Over and again you will hear, "India is India..." and "India is different." Both are true and at multiple levels of understanding. India is deep. Where else will you converse with beggars and taxi drivers about the purpose of life, its meaning, and concepts of spirit, body, mind, intelligence, and "maya" illusion. By being open to Indian perceptions you will learn. India is surely the most spiritual place on earth. And it may also seem at times to be the dirtiest, nicest, ugliest, sweetest, most complex, simplest, most exciting, and mundane place you have visited. Some travelers report, "India is everything." It might be added, to make the point, that India is everything - and more.

Mother India will take care of you nicely or kick you in the pants.... Determine early how you will approach her. Clear goals and openness will provide the best results.

Don't count on electricity. Its delivery is erratic in India. Also telephones often don't work. The nation is not interconnected with standard telephone lines, you cannot just pick up a phone and dial. There are telegraphs, the old British railroad system. Still, don't depend on telegraphing ahead, or mail.... Do write letters home, but you'll probably return before they arrive. Distance communications in India are slow.

Errand boys, though, are plentiful. For a coin, or just to please you, males young and old will ask to carry a package, go find shoes for you that fit, escort you for shopping, get money

changed, obtain whatever food you want, or deliver a message. There's no pony express. You'll often just have to wait until you reach a place....

About thieves. They exist in India. Criminals there are called "dacoits." No crime is unknown. Prisoners escape from jails. There are "master criminals" and "gangs." Percentagewise though, the crime rate is low in India. It is a gentle and kind society of societies, more diverse than any other, and surely more tolerant. With a population more than four times that of the United States there is much less than four times the crime. It would be amazing if the rate is as high as one fourth that of the U.S. Rather than be apprehensive, use precaution.

Petty crime can be discouraged. Don't go in alleys to exchange money with strangers. Be honest with people and almost all will be honest with you. If people offer to buy your watch, camera, or whatever, respectfully decline - and smile.

Carry small change to share with beggars, their role is historic in India; it is good citizenship to be kind to the poor. A Hindu proverb suggests, "Those who give have all things, those who hold nothing." Respect the leveling down of India: everyone needs to survive; if one has a spare coin, banana, or extra sandals, why not put them to good use? Give and you will be given to in India. Thieves know and respect this, their likeliest targets are not the meek and humble but those appearing rich and vain. Pretentiousness can cost you too much in India.

In Calcutta's Howrah Railroad Station people do sleep on

the floor - step around or over them. A boy could put fiberglass down your back to distract and take your purse, don't tempt him. Cover your neck and arms. Secure passport, tickets, and money beneath your clothing - pouches hung from neck strings are convenient and your possessions are always there in front of you where they can be felt and controlled. If natives advise you not to go down a street or not to visit an area, respect their good counsel. Carry along your own combination locks - often lodging rooms will have door hasps for guests' locks; be prepared. Pack in durable luggage, plain hard surfaces repel the petty thief. Best is a simple suitcase with a recessed combination lock. Deter the dacoit!

If you do not know how much to give a beggar or what to pay a rickshaw or taxi driver, ask aloud. In India someone will almost always step forward and explain in English. What is right to give or pay is generally known and Indians give advice freely. Expect them to be helpful. They rejoice in such opportunities. Often one who has just advised you what to do will explain that his "sister lives in Los Angeles...for twenty-six years," "son wants to go to medical school in New York," or "saw your soccer team play in the olympics on television...."

Notice that the word "he" has been used often. In India, males are most likely to have conversation with other males. It's not that India is sexist, there are probably more women corporation presidents and legislators than in the U.S. The woman's role is a revered one and no one who knows India says

things like "women are powerless." If you are female you'll have many coversations with females and males. Don't be shy, in their own way the Indian women you see aren't. Also you'll find the president of India was raised as an untouchable. That caste system is illegal now and broken if not totally collapsed. Today, former untouchables can enjoy special status in the form of free tuition and other benefits. India is trying.

As for money, forget dollars. On arrival in India, go immediately to the legal currency exchange in the airport and get rupees. You can't get travelers checks in rupees; hotels usually prefer dollar-denominated travelers checks and credit cards. American Express and MasterCard are widely used. It's prudent to have several kinds of travelers checks: one bank won't take American Express but wants Citibank checks, another may be the reverse. Just buy two kinds of travelers checks and you'll be prepared. Regarding credit cards, ask first whether there will be a fee or extra cost. Indian Airlines, for instance, may add 40% to a ticket price if you use a credit card, but not if you pay with rupees, dollars, or travelers checks. In India, be flexible.

One U.S. dollar currently exchanges for twelve-and-a-half rupees. Thus, a rupee represents approximately eight cents. If a soda costs three rupees, that's $.24. Each rupee divides into 100 pais, so a dollar buys 1250 pais. In villages you may drink coconut juice for an infinitesimal amount, say 50 pais (four cents). You'll find things in India which cost even less. A match, for example, or a small bead carved by hand.

One handsome, middle-aged Sikh guide in Calcutta shared the information that his rent for a family apartment was $3.20 per month. It seemed ridiculously low. His three children all attended college and he averaged $8 to $12 per day as a guide catering to westerners. A vice president of a village bank might earn $1.20 per day. There is great variance in India. The average earnings are less than $300 per year. They'll ask how much you make. Tell the truth or have a stock answer ready. One medical doctor when told that he could make a thousand dollars a day in the U.S. replied, "Yes, I have only one pant and one shirt, but my children. I do not need much. I have everything I need. I am content." So often Indians will respond in converstion, "This is a very poor country." It's nice to add, "and very rich!" Most Indians exist on less than a dollar a day. You could upset a local economy by out of line tipping; ask Indians what is proper.

Save some rupees. When you depart India a travel tax must be paid in cash. Lately it's 1,000 rupees (1,000R) or around $8. Having that exact amount is as important as your passport and ticket. In these scenarios you may find inflexibility is the rule, the supervisor has gone home, "English not spoken," and "no checks accepted." Some fellow traveler will probably bail you out, but avoid the crisis - plan ahead. Spend it all, expect for that stipulated amount. You'll be told what it is when you arrive. Remember the "departure tax."

This seems harsh. But India has her rules. On the positive side, you may receive extra free trips courtesy of whatever

transporter you use. Air India has been known to take a passenger from Delhi to Calcutta to Bombay free. "It's ok," the clerk explained, "They're the same price." When a nice surprise occurs, accept and enjoy it. A railroad ticket seller may charge you less than you expected, a conductor may let you ride further free. "Take, eat" may be heard from in a market as you fumble for correct change for an apple or orange, "No cost, please, enjoy." There are longs and shorts in India. The sum, if you approach reasonably, is likelier to be long. "I will come back, it's wonderful" is not uncommonly heard as tourists depart.

Plan to be educated by India. No matter how many books you've read and movies you've seen, there's more to India than you could possibly already know. We learn by doing and you will never be the same after glimpsing the majestic Himalayas or standing in early morning mists in ancient Benares on the Ganges. Old when Rome was young, India has lessons to teach which can only be learned there. Your life is much more linked with India than you've probably thought. From where else did European domesticated cows come thousands of years ago? Frankincense and myrrh, they're common supplies in India. Did you know Jesus spent seventeen years in India? He's reported to have lived and taught in Jagganatha Puri and Benares, to have studied with Hindu and Buddhist monks and lived in the Himalayas before returning to Palestine for his last years on earth. St. Thomas? He came to India soon after the crucifixion of Christ. There are eighty million Christians in India, the

religion was old there before our European ancestors began to leave their Druid faith and take it on. Jews have lived in India for nearly three thousand years. And Chinese, there are "Chinatowns" in Indian cities too. Pharisees, Zoroastrians found sanctuary in India after being driven out of Muslim Iran. They remain grateful for the opportunity to survive and live among the tolerant Hindus. Sikhs, Jains? You'll learn more than can be told, if you're open to India.

You could die in India, people do everyday. But in this society of nearly one billion human beings, you'll never be far from a doctor or medical aid station. Madras hospitals are like those you know, their doctors may have been trained in Los Angeles, New York, Hamburg, or London (where their brothers or sisters may currently be practicing). No one wants you to be ill or pass away under their care. In severe cases, a patient can be flown for medical care to Singapore, Hong Kong, Berlin, Paris, the U.S. There is a primitive India and an India with helicopters and 747 jets.

In a village, with diarrhea, you might ask the rickshaw man to take you to "hospital" or "doctor." The doctor may come to you. City hotels will have medical information posted for your convenience and can bring a doctor to your room. He or she will probably speak English, at least communicate, and you're not likely to have anything not previously seen. You may just be handed medicine on the spot and no bill. Or, you might receive a prescription and small bill. Much medicine is practiced by chemists, pharmacists, who prescribe while you stand before

them in their chemist shop "drug store." If you prefer herbalistic Ayurvedic treatment it is available. Streptomycin is dispensed over the counter for diarrhea in India; a week's supply might cost 20R ($1.60 more or less).

Purchasing tickets could be the most time consuming, boring task you face in India. It seems that every change of ticket requires a day or at least hours. Learn to wait. Observe and reflect. Take along a book. Be patient. Converse with Indians, most will be delighted and many will put you before themselves and insist that you are serviced "as quickly as possible." Don't be surprised if trains "don't go there" the day you wish or if they've "sold out." Buy all the tickets you expect to need before leaving for India - it will save you money and time. Then, as you like and need, purchase some tickets along the way. You'll discover eighteen-hour bus rides which cost as little as $2.50, all-night trains for $4.00 to $6.00. Let India amaze, she can delight.

Have you brought a small flashlight? Extra batteries? Toothbrush? Toothpaste? Extra shoe laces? A small mirror can be useful. The fashionable fabric luggage in several sizes, smaller fitting into larger when not in use, is wonderful. You can expand on the last day packing gifts and other purchases and be conveniently on your way. Consider a combination-locking-bicycle-safety cable as well, with it you can fasten a suitcase to an iron bed and feel so much more secure. Cord, string, rope? Comb? Peppermint tea bags? Sunflower seeds. A fingernail file and small scissors? Bring along whatever small

personal items comfort you. Dental floss, a small sewing kit. Books, business cards to exchange, and 3"x5" index cards with pencils for making notes can be helpful. Bring your own maps and a small notebook in which to record such things as telephone numbers, addresses, impressions, and expenses. How about a metal or plastic cup? You may prefer it to the clay ones commonly used. And your own compact fork, knife, and spoon? Some extra plastic "baggies" just in case.... Keep it light though. Why take more than you need? A medium sized suitcase is more than sufficient along with a convenient shoulder bag for one to three months in India. Anything you need can be purchased when needed. You can adapt. Throw away broken sandals, buy new. One pair of pants - dark and durable - can do for a long while. You can wash clothes nightly, the climate is generally warm and dry. Someone will wash and iron anything - day or night. You needn't take along a burdensome wardrobe. Help yourself have a successful trip: take little, buy as needed along the way.

By now you have the picture. Plan in advance and the probability of success is enhanced. You're not likely to get sick, eat bad food, get robbed, fall into holes, be bitten by a snake, or even inconvenienced. You may want to stay in India the rest of your relaxed, satisfying, long life. Surely you'll want to return.

Not much can go wrong. People will be kinder and more helpful beyond that to which you are accustomed. They'll be nice. You be nice and a pleasant experience is practically

assured.

Oh, yes, language. English will do. Analysts report that only 3-5% of Indians speak English and that there are hundreds of languages used, more in India than any other place. You'll get by. Smile, point, ask with your eyes. Actions speak louder than words. People will help you.

At first, India may seem slow. Be patient. When you return home you'll regret the speed and hastiness which you once thought normal. India has much to teach. Ordinary Indians have been thinking about the purpose of human life for thousands of years and they've identified some rational practices which enhance living. You'll become, if not an "Indiaman (or woman)," much more conscious, basic, and tolerant - a bit more "Indian."